

CSDF stand tall for final retreat

by Rachel Newton

Despite the cold, blustery day, a small crowd gathered Jan. 14 for the final retreat ceremony of the 1-142nd Field Artillery Forward, Noble Eagle IV, Chemical Site Defense Force (CSDF).

"Effective 15 January 2005, the Pine Bluff Chemical Site Defense mission is completed," stated Capt. Justin Buller, JAG officer and narrator of the afternoon ceremony.

Following an invocation by Maj. (Chaplain) Melvin Stanley, retreat was sounded, authority was relinquished and the CSDF guidon (small flag or pennant) was encased. "We gather together today to celebrate the successful culmination of a mission well done," said Stanley. "The Soldiers who have served at the Pine Bluff Arsenal (PBA) have completed their mission and now look forward to returning to family and friends. Thank you for the direction and support we have received."

The encasing of the guidon is a time honored symbol of the relinquishing of authority, said Buller. "Throughout the centuries, the unit colors have served as a rallying point to battle," he said. "Although unit colors have not been carried in battle since the Civil War, they continue to commemorate the glory of our past achievements and serve as an inspiration for the future."

This fourth rotation of National Guard Soldiers deployed to secure the chemical stockpile at PBA since Sept. 11, 2001, are being replaced by newly hired Department of the Army security guards, according to Lt. Col. Jim Bayha, commander of the Pine Bluff Chemical Activity (PBCA). Soldiers from Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas have been part of the CSDF mission over the past 4 years.

"I want to say mission complete," said Bayha, addressing the Soldiers lined up in front of Prentiss Hall (Headquarters Building). "I want to personally thank you and your families for serving our country. Our nation called and I want you to know that you answered that call to duty superbly."

Bayha reflected on some of his speech given last April during the CSDF change of command. "I mentioned last April that all of us serving in the military at this time have a role to play in the global war on terrorism. Be extremely proud of the fact that you have done your part and you have done it exceptionally well."

Many of the Soldiers in the 1-142nd are serving in their home state. "Arkansas can be extremely proud of all you have done," said Bayha.

Outgoing unit commander Capt. Marcus Bussell and 1st Sgt. Otis Hester have led the CSDF mission of chemical site security at PBA since April 2004.

"I have said from the onset of this mission 'success is defined as a boring year'," said Bussell. "I congratulate you on a very boring year. Job well done."

Bussell offered his thanks to everyone for all the support during the deployment. "God speed home," he said.

Before departing the Arsenal, each Soldier will receive letters from the director of the Chemical Material Agency, PBA commander and PBCA commander.

"This is truly a bittersweet day for the Arsenal team. First, we have to say goodbye to such a fine and proud organization," said Sgt. Maj. Jerry Curtiss. "It is sad. They have touched each of our hearts in different ways and have had a significant impact not just here but in the local community."

But, it is also a great day, said Curtiss. "A great day to reflect on all the achievements they have accomplished in their time here. That list is long. Their support of the global war on terrorism is nothing short of phenomenal."

Cutline

Soldiers with the 1-142nd Field Artillery Forward, Chemical Site Defense Force stand at attention to their final retreat ceremony Jan. 14. The unit is made up of Soldiers from the Arkansas National Guard. (U.S. Army photo by Hugh Morgan)